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CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

1872.10.

# CHAUCER'S FRANKLIN'S TALE

BY

WILLIAM HENRY SCHOFIELD

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[Reprinted from the *Publications of the Modern Language Association  
of America*, Vol. XVI, No. 3.]

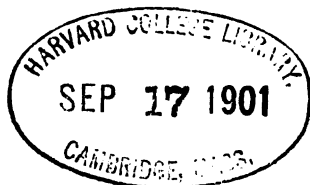
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THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
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BALTIMORE.

## CHAUCER'S FRANKLIN'S TALE.

### I.

The Canterbury pilgrims, more fortunate than we, had heard to the end the *Squire's Tale*, and were busy exchanging with one another looks of approval and satisfaction. Now was the Franklin's opportunity. He determined to be the one to break the significant silence and become the spokesman of the praise of his companions, not only by reason of his very genuine enjoyment of the narrative just concluded, but also because of the chance he thus secured to bring himself into honorable association with the gentles on the pilgrimage.

'In feith, Squier, thou hast thee wel y-quit,  
And gentilly I preise wel thy wit,'  
Quod the Frankeleyn.

And, indeed, the Franklin was right: the Squire had acquitted himself uncommonly well and deserved the praise the "worthy vavasour" so freely bestowed upon him. This young chevalier, strong but graceful, high in station but "lowly" of demeanor, though passionate in love still "servisable" to his father, filled the ambitious householder with unqualified admiration. If only his son were like that of the Knight. If only he, instead of being a common gambler, associating by preference with servants and ordinary folk, would take pattern after this courteous youth, and "lerne gentillesse aright." Yes, the Franklin certainly had aspirations above the common. He plainly respected the qualities of manner and disposition that the Squire exhibited, and longed for the distinction of superior bearing and inherited dignity. When, then, the host exclaims, "Straw for your gentillesse," and abruptly calls on him to fulfil his behest by telling a tale, he responds gladly. Though he is careful

to explain in advance, with a deferential bow to his betters, that he is only a "burel" man and his speech rude, he is nevertheless eager to show his acquaintance with stories of gentle folk, in which he would gladly have his son also take delight.

That his tale was happily chosen from this point of view will appear later. Let us first strive to get a clear idea of its source, nature, and mode of composition.

↓ Chaucer says explicitly that the *Franklin's Tale* is based on a "Breton lay." But no lay dealing with this subject is extant, and although the poet's statement has usually been accepted by scholars as likely to be true, no evidence (except the vague remark that in general it resembles the lays of Marie de France) has as yet been offered in confirmation of this view. To be sure, it has been frequently noted that the story is localized in Brittany and that the names of the persons mentioned are Breton; but, on the other hand, so large a number of Oriental and other parallels to part of the tale have been pointed out, that the impression is almost inevitably left upon the student that if ever embodied in a lay called Breton, it was not by virtue of its origin, and that there could have been little that was Breton about it except the name and perhaps the style of presentation. Further study shows him that the poem is so obviously different in tone and spirit in different parts that it cannot all come originally from one source. If we can discover, then, the nature of its foundation, and the quarries from which the stones of the substructure have been obtained, we shall have solved a puzzling problem.

A careful analysis of the *Franklin's Tale* reveals the fact that at bottom it is a simple story of an unusually happy marriage between the British lord Arveragus and his beautiful wife Dorigen. She, we learn, was "oon the faireste under sonne," and of a very high kindred. With her husband she lived for a time after their marriage in great prosperity "a ful blisful lyf;" but he, being a "man of armes," soon felt

called upon to leave her, to carry on war in England. During his absence she pined constantly for him, as was indeed not unnatural, for Chaucer tells us that she loved her husband "as hir hertes lyf,"<sup>1</sup> and that he also on his side loved her "as his owene hertes lyf."

The difficulty of her lonely position was, however, increased by the fact that while Arveragus was away she had to resist the importunate wooing of a passionate lover, whom she could only dismiss, without unnecessary offence, by promising to grant him her love, on condition that he performed a seemingly impossible task. But this matter affected her, in reality, so little that she did not think it worth while to tell her husband.

Nothing list him to been imaginatyf  
If any wight had spoke, whyl he was owte,  
To hire of love; he hadde of it no doute,  
He noght entendeth to no swich matere,  
But daunceth, justeth, maketh hir good chere. (366 ff.)

Nothing mars their exceedingly happy life together until one day the wife learns from her sometime lover that he has performed the task she thought impossible, and that he awaits the fulfillment of her promise. When she in great anxiety tells Arveragus of her sad predicament, instead of reproaching her, "this housbond with glad chere, in frendly wyse," gave her comfort and counsel. He will not let his personal feelings interfere with the performance of what she thinks her duty.

'Ye shul your trouthe holden, by my fay!  
For god so wisly have mercy on me,  
I hadde wel lever y-atiked for to be,  
For verray love which that I to yow have,  
But if ye sholde your trouthe kepe and save,  
Trouthe is the hyeste thing that man may kepe.' (746 ff.)

<sup>1</sup>A not uncommon phrase in Middle English poems:—see, e. g., *Sir Orfeo*, ll. 121, 175; *Erl of Tolous* (ed. Lüdtkke), 481–82; *Yvain and Gawaine*, 4011; *Seven Sages*, 270, 2566; *Sir Degarre* (Abbotsford Club), 21; also Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, 36, and *Manciple's Tale*, 36; cf. Zielke, *Sir Orfeo*, Breslau, 1880, p. 16.

His heart is wrung with anguish at the unexpected misfortune that has befallen her; but his only request is that she say nothing of it to others. "As I may best," he says,

'I wol my wo endure,  
Ne make no contenance of hevinesse,  
That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse.' (756 ff.)

He considerably arranges for her escort to the garden where she is to meet her lover, eager that no one else shall know of her trouble. As for her, she goes simply because he wishes her to do so. When with a heavy heart she explains the situation to Aurelius, he is sincerely touched, and thus addresses her:

'Madame, seyth to your lord Arveragus,  
That sith I see his grete gentillesse  
To yow, and eek I see wel your distresse,  
That him were lever han shame (and that were routhe)  
Than ye to me sholde breke thus your trouthe,  
I have wel lever ever to suffre wo  
Than I departe the love bitwix yow two.

and here I take my leve,  
As of the treweste and the beste wyf  
That ever yet I knew in al my lyf.' (799 ff.)

Here, then, we have the picture of a supremely happy marriage, a portrayal of the ideal relations between man and wife. On the one side, a wife of extraordinary beauty and high kindred, and on the other, a husband distinguished as a warrior, with "many worthy men" to follow him—both willing to sacrifice themselves for their honorable love. No wonder we read:

Arveragus and Dorigene his wyf  
In sovereyn blisse leden forth hir lyf.  
Never eft ne was ther angre hem bitwene;  
He cheriseth hir as though she were a quene;  
And she was to him trewe for evermore. (823 ff.)

## II.

It has not, I believe, been hitherto observed that we have evidence in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, finished in 1136, that this charming story was current among the Celts at an early period, before the time of Marie de France and the period of production of the so-called Breton lays in their metrical French form. In Bk. IV, ch. 13-16, Geoffrey gives us a very interesting account of the life of the ancient British chieftain Arviragus, the son of Cymbeline, who after his elder brother's death, is said to have ruled in Britain. Geoffrey informs us that "in war none was more fierce than he, in peace none more mild, none more pleasing, or in his presents more magnificent." After warring successfully against the Roman general Claudius, he made peace with him and was given Claudius's daughter in marriage. The historian's chief solicitude is to exalt the happiness of this supposed marriage. He writes as follows: "The damsel's name was Genuissa, and so great was her beauty that it raised the admiration of all that saw her. After her marriage with the king, she gained so great an ascendant over his affections, that he in a manner valued nothing but her alone: insomuch that he was desirous to have the place honoured where the nuptials were solemnized, and moved Claudius to build a city [namely, Gloucester] upon it, for a monument to posterity of so great and happy a marriage."<sup>1</sup>

No one will question the statement that Geoffrey's narrative of the reign of Arviragus is not authentic history. Bede and Nennius make no mention of such a person, though they both deal with the expedition of Claudius to Britain and his subduing of the Orkneys. In fact, it is practically certain that Geoffrey here only elaborated a hint he got from a

<sup>1</sup>Giles's translation, *Six O. E. Chronicles*, p. 151; cf. San Marte's edition, p. 56.

passage in the fourth satire of Juvenal, which he quotes. This satire is directed against Domitian. A big fish having been sent the Emperor, all the courtiers take the opportunity to flatter him when they offer suggestions as to what it foretells. One of them says:

Regem aliquem capies, aut de temone Britanno  
Decidet Arviragus.

which indicated that there was some British chieftain called by the Romans Arviragus, who had made himself troublesome to Domitian—quite sufficient justification for Geoffrey to introduce him into his line of British kings, though he may have been assisted in so doing by the scholium in a Juvenal manuscript: "Arviragus Britannorum rex."<sup>1</sup> But a misunderstanding of Juvenal's words led him to put Arviragus in the wrong place. The satirist, instead of naming Domitian by name, designated him as "a bald-headed Nero."<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey took this literally,<sup>3</sup> and so represented Arviragus as living in the time of Nero, a generation too

<sup>1</sup> See Mayor, *Thirteen Satires of Juvenal*, 4th ed., 1886, I, 238, who remarks: "It was in the year 84, the fourth of Domitian, that Agricola was recalled from Britain, where the work of subjugation remained unfinished." For references in classical writers to the use of chariots (*essedæ*) by the Celtic warriors see Ludwig Friedlaender, *D. Junii Juvenalis Satirarum Libri V*, Leipzig, 1895, I, 253, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Calvo Neroni*, IV, 38; cf. Mayor's note, I, 223 f.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to my friend, Dr. R. H. Fletcher, for this suggestion. It is interesting to observe how Geoffrey's reference to Juvenal was misunderstood by Robert of Brunne:

Gode kyng he was, we find in boke;  
A boke men calle it Juenal;  
Of stories it spekes alle;  
At Gloucester it sais he lies,  
And the quene, dame Genuys.

Thus the whole of the developed fictitious narrative of Arviragus's life is definitely attributed to the "stories" in the book called Juvenal. Fable certainly ever clothes itself anew. Citation of authorities evidently does not prove acquaintance with them.

soon. Thus it was natural to bring him into connection with Claudius, whose expedition to Britain had taken place just before (A. D. 43). It was natural also to make him the son of Cymbeline, who held sway in Britain at that time. It was natural further, in the light of Juvenal's reference, to say that "his fame spread over all Europe, and he was both loved and feared by the Romans, and became the subject of their discourse more than any king in his time."

But what about Geoffrey's account of the marriage of Arviragus with the daughter of Claudius? This, of course, is not historical. Even Holinshed went out of his way to warn his readers from belief in such a fabrication, writing thus prudently:

"But Suetonius maie seeme to reprove this part of the British historie, which in the life of Claudius witnesseth, that he had by three wives only three daughters, that is to say, Claudia, Antonia, and Octavia: and further, that reputing Claudia not to be his, caused her to be cast downe at the dore of his wife Herculanilla, whom he had forsaken by waie of diuorcement: and that he bestowed his daughter Antonia first on C. Pompeius Magnus, and after on Faustus Silla, verie noble yong gentlemen; and Octavia he matched with Nero his wiues son. Whereby it should appeere, that this supposed marriage betwixt Aruiragus and the daughter of Claudius is but a feined tale."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed adds these interesting remarks (Bk. iv, ch. 3):

"And heere to speeke my fansie also what I thinke of this Aruiragus, and other kings (whome Galfrid and such as have followed him do register in order, to succeed one after another). I will not denie but such persons there were, and the same happilie bearing verie great rule in the land, but that they reigned as absolute kings over the whole, or that they succeeded one after another in manner as it is auouched by the same writers, it seemeth most unlike to be true: for rather it maie be gessed by that, which as well Gyldas as the old approved Romane writers haue written that diuerse of these kings liued about one time, or in times greatlie differing from those times which in our writers we find noted. As for example, Juenal maketh this Aruiragus of whom we now intreat, to reign about Domitians time. For my part, therefore, sith this order



"A feined tale" it certainly is, if by that is meant that Geoffrey had no historical foundation for his assertions, but not if it is further implied that he had no foundation of any kind for what he says, the account being not simply a new combination but a wholly original fabric of his imagination. On the contrary, Geoffrey would not, I feel confident, have singled out this particular chieftain as the only one whose happy marriage deserved special mention, had he not had in mind some traditional story of a hero with the same name in which this fact was made especially prominent.<sup>1</sup>

That in this place Geoffrey should work current tradition into his narrative, is not in the least surprising to any one familiar with his methods. He was, we know, a shrewd fabricator, who, in his effort to enliven the dull pages of chronicle history, drew material boldly from current fables, and pictured historical characters in colors too dazzlingly vivid to be true, though all the while protesting that what he wrote was an authentic record of actual events. By the splendor of his rhetoric, however, he dulled the vision of most of his

of the British kinglie succession in this place is more easie to be flatlie denied and utterlie reprovèd, than either wiselie defended or trulie amended, I will referre the reforming therof unto those that haue perhaps seene more than I have, or more deepelie considered the thing, to trie out an undoubted truth: in the meane time I have thought good, both to shew what I find in our histories, and likewise in forren writers, to the which we think (namelie in this behalfe, whilst the Romans gouerned there) we maie safelie giue most credit, do we otherwise neuer so much content ourselves with other vaine and fond conceits."

<sup>1</sup>It was a regular thing for Latin writers to utilize popular songs and stories in their accounts of historical personages. Compare, for example, the way in which Geoffrey's contemporary, William of Malmesbury, wrote (ca. 1142) of Gunhild, daughter of Cnut the Great, who married King Henry, afterwards the Emperor Henry III, in 1036. The particular ballad used by William is moreover of especial interest to us in this connection because it is closely allied to the "Breton lay" of *The Erl of Tolous* (only preserved in English) which is strikingly like the *Franklin's Tale* in fundamental theme (see below, p. 437). On the Gunhild story in romantic literature see Child, *Eng. and Scottish Pop. Ballads*, II, 37 ff., "Sir Aldingar." This story was also attached to Matilda, daughter of Henry I of England.

contemporaries, and by his calm assurance confounded their incredulity. Both British and Normans wished to believe his statements and they therefore found it easy to lull their suspicions to rest. His "history," bewildering though it was, was accepted as trustworthy, and his stupendous fabrications were read with delight. Had I space I could point out that much of the Arthurian saga in Geoffrey was concocted, even as his life of Arviragus, by the bold transformation of simple popular tales, which, when dignified by his high-sounding phrases, were credited as real historical events. In his chapters on Arthur he carried his unblushing effrontery farthest, and with infinite *sang-froid* decked out our ancient British hero, the *dux bellorum* of a rude epoch, in the gorgeous habiliments of an Anglo-Norman king. No one nowadays feels inclined to reproach him on this account. We have gained too much by the impulse he gave Arthurian fiction. But our gratitude to him for his work need not blind us to his methods. In the problem before us an understanding of his regular mode of procedure is necessary if we are to arrive at the truth.

The truth then is, I believe, that Geoffrey knew a story of Arviragus and his wife Dorigen, which portrayed them as exceedingly happy in marriage. Their union was one of perfect accord, and though their love was put to the test, it suffered no break, but was rather increased by the strain. Thus, Chaucer's tale, in helping us to an explanation of Geoffrey's account, receives an external confirmation of its own claim to antiquity. Inasmuch as in Geoffrey's time there was clearly current in Britain, or Armorica, a story which exalted the happy marriage of Arviragus, it is most probable that it was that very Celtic story which formed the ultimate basis of the *Franklin's Tale*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With Chaucer's lines quoted above (p. 408), it is not without interest to compare the following from Lagamon:

his lond heold Arviragus  
& Genuis his quene,

It may be wise to say here that the situation cannot well be the reverse of what I have said: Geoffrey's brief statements about Arviragus and his wife cannot reasonably be regarded as the source or foundation of this Breton tale. In the first place, they are too summary and general to form the basis of any narrative such as the one before us; and, in the second, none of Geoffrey's peculiar combinations (such as his connecting Arviragus with Claudius and the founding of Gloucester) are even vaguely alluded to in the poem, nor is there in it a single detail that points particularly to his history. The Breton tale of Arviragus was, it appears, quite independent of Geoffrey. It was, I repeat, almost certainly from some version of it that the historical romancer got the suggestions for the life of his British king of the same name.

In this Celtic tale, there is no reason to doubt that the wife's name, if she had any, was Dorigen, in older form Dorguen, or Droguen (the name, it may be observed, of the wife of Alain I), though of course there is no certainty to be attained in such a case. *Genuissa*, the name given her by Geoffrey, is clearly a free Latinization of the Celtic name she originally bore, or a fanciful appellation. Roberts says<sup>1</sup> that the name is "the Welsh reading" of *Venusia*, and I suppose one might think that the rhetorical Geoffrey fashioned it from some form with *Gen*, or *Gwen*, as one element because of the suggestion it contained of the beautiful goddess of love.<sup>2</sup>

---

be wifmon wel idone.  
 þa isæh pisses ledes king  
 þat him ne derede naþing.  
 þus he wunede here  
 mid blisse twenti jere.

(9653 ff.)

'Arviragus and his queen Genuis, the very fair woman, held this land. Then the king of this people saw that nothing troubled him. Thus he dwelt here with bliss twenty years.'

In the life of Arviragus the English historian, as usual, greatly expands Wace, his original, (chaps. XII-XVI occupy about 800 lines, 9186 ff.) but here without adding anything really significant.

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. of the Kings of Britain*, London, 1811, p. 86, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Dorigen's lover is called in Chaucer a "servant of Venus."

But I would hazard what seems to me a much more likely guess. Geoffrey tells us that the city of Gloucester<sup>1</sup> was founded "for a monument to posterity of so great and happy a marriage," and thus definitely associates Arviragus and his wife with the people of the old kingdom of Gwent, in which he himself lived. Now the Welsh name of an inhabitant of Gwent was *G(w)enhwyss*. May not Geoffrey have simply given this word the Latin feminine ending *-a* and coined his *Genuissa*,<sup>2</sup> thereby making that beautiful and virtuous woman not only the leading but the representative lady of the kingdom? Such a procedure, it should be said, was quite characteristic of Geoffrey, for anyone who has read his book must have seen how systematically he accounts by eponym for the names of the cities, rivers, and districts that he has

<sup>1</sup>Geoffrey says that the city Claudius founded was called after him Kaerglou, that is, Gloucester. In the following sentence, however, he adds another explanation of the name: "But some say that it derived its name from Duke Gloius, a son that was born to Claudius there, and to whom, after the death of Arviragus, fell the kingdom of Dimetia." He doubtless felt forced to offer this alternative eponymous founder, because of the statement in the *Historia Britonum* (§ 49), at the end of the genealogy of Vortigern. Guitolion of Gloui is there said to have been one of four brothers "who built Gloiuda, a great city upon the banks of the river Severn, and in British is called Cair Gloui, in Saxon Gloucester."

It should be noted that Geoffrey had no more foundation for his statement that this Gloui was a son of Claudius, than for his statements about the marriage of that emperor's daughter to Arviragus. He would have asserted dogmatically that Gloucester got its name from Claudius, whom he chose to represent as his founder, with the assurance that his assertion could not be disproved (for was he not simply translating Archdeacon Walter's British book?), had he not been well aware that his contemporaries knew of the totally different and much more probable explanation in Nennius. So he decided to give both, albeit they were inconsistent; and, to bring them into some sort of harmony, he remarked that if the city was really called after a Gloui, this person was at any rate "a son that was born to Claudius there." Alas! for the genealogy of Vortigern, thus put to shame. Alas! for historic truth in the hands of a jesting prelate.

<sup>2</sup>The form *Juvenissa* (*Juvenissa*) in the abbreviation of Geoffrey by Ponticus Virunnius (p. 105) is of course a corruption. The *Brut Gruffyd ap Arthur* has *Gennyves*. The *Brut Tysilio* has no name. See San Marte's Geoffrey, p. 264.

occasion to mention. It is particularly interesting in this connection to compare his remark, near the end of his book (xii, 19), that the *Gualenses* (Welshmen) were so called "either from *Gualo* their leader, or *Guales* their queen." If he could make up a queen *Guales* to account for the *Gualenses* why not a queen *Genuissa* to account for the *Genhuysson*? Whatever be the case, it is clear that Geoffrey's form of the wife's name is either transformed or invented, and cannot be regarded as that of the wife in the original Breton story, though it may have been suggested by it—and, further, that it affords us another reason for rejecting the idea that the tale may have been a development of Geoffrey's meagre hint, else why should not the heroine bear the name he gave her.

We have found, then, good reasons for believing that there existed an early Celtic story about Arviragus and Dorigen, telling of their love-making, marriage, and happy life together. In order to show the devotion of each to the other, the complete confidence of the husband in his wife's fidelity and her unwavering loyalty to him, there was probably in this early story a severe test to which each was subjected, but in which each showed so high-minded a nature that their love was only made stronger by having been obliged to undergo an ordeal of fear. There is every reason to believe, moreover, that this, their trouble, was due to the wooing of the wife by an importunate suitor, whom she dismissed, as she thought finally, though because of her kind-heartedness without unnecessary offence, by requiring him to achieve a marvel before he could enjoy her love.

This theme, of establishing an apparently impossible condition as a barrier to a lover's success in winning a lady, it is important to observe, is paralleled in at least two extant Breton lays. In the lay of *Doon*,<sup>1</sup> a lady, in order to free herself from her suitors, established the condition that only he should win her who succeeded in travelling from Edin-

<sup>1</sup> *Romania*, viii, 61 ff.

burgh to Southampton in one day. In the lay of *Dous Amanz*,<sup>1</sup> a king, in order to keep his daughter unmarried, issued an edict that no one should be permitted to marry her who had not previously carried her in his arms to the top of a very high mountain in the neighborhood of his castle. In both these cases, aid was given the lover by supernatural agencies. Doon succeeded in going as fast as the swan could fly because he had in his possession the marvellous horse Bayard.<sup>2</sup> In *Dous Amanz*, the lover travelled at the suggestion of his beloved to Salerno to her aged relative, who gave him a magic potion by which he might win his suit. In this latter case, we come near the situation in the *Franklin's Tale*, where the lover travels south to Orleans to an old comrade of his brother who has become wise in magic, and gets from him the aid he requires to remove the rocks from the Breton coast.

But not only is this general theme thus twice paralleled in Breton lays, it should further be noted that the particular condition imposed on the lover in our tale has also an interesting parallel in Celtic tradition. I refer to the story at the bottom of Geoffrey's rationalized account (Bk. x, chaps. 10-12) of how the magician Merlin transported the great rocks from Mt. Killaraus in Ireland to build the celebrated Giant's Dance at Stonehenge, an undertaking so seemingly impossible of execution that the British king, we read, "burst into laughter" at the mere suggestion of attempting it. When, however, he finally urged Merlin to bring it about, the magician set his agencies to work and soon achieved the wonder, giving thereby, as Geoffrey words it, "a manifest proof of the prevalence of art above strength." It is easy to see how Geoffrey could have rationalized a story of the

<sup>1</sup> Warnke, *Lais des Marie de France*, pp. 113 ff.

<sup>2</sup> In the oldest Danish version of "Sir Olaf and the Elf," the latter makes Olaf great offers if he will pledge his troth to her, among other things a horse that would go to Rome and back in an hour; see Child, *Ballads*, I, 375.

seeming removal of rocks by magic and used it to explain the origin of that remarkable monument whose construction antedates any of our historical records—an ancient landmark which our forefathers were quite as anxious as we to have explained, and much more ready to regard as the product of mysterious forces.

Let me add in this connection a remark which is perhaps not without significance. The British king I have referred to, who follows the counsel of his friends and sends a long distance for the magician to help him in his difficulty—a difficulty solved by the removal of enormous rocks by magic—is named Aurelius; and, as we remember, the Breton knight in our Tale, who accepts the counsel of his brother and goes a long distance to get the aid of the magician in removing the enormous rocks from the Breton coast, is also called Aurelius. There seems to be connection between these two situations. I do not think it necessary to postulate a borrowing from, or even the influence of Geoffrey in the case of Aurelius any more than in that of Arviragus. Geoffrey's stories of Merlin are neither historical nor wholly of his own invention, but rather adapted from popular tradition. In writing the lives of the two British kings mentioned in our poem, he manifestly drew material from popular sources—and the *Franklin's Tale* in a very unexpected but very interesting manner seems to establish this important fact.

It may be remarked that in our Tale the removal of the rocks is only an illusion, while Merlin is represented as actually transporting the Giant's Dance across the sea. This circumstance, far from militating against the parallel, rather serves to strengthen it. Illusion, as is well known, plays a very large part in Celtic stories. There we find countless illusory creations and illusory transformations—so that we may safely assert that this feature of the rock episode is truly primitive. Even in Geoffrey's rationalized account, Merlin effects what he does by magic.

If, moreover, we push the comparison of Merlin's exploits with those of the Breton magician still further, we observe that all the marvels performed by the latter are closely paralleled by achievements ascribed to the more celebrated enchanter of Arthurian romance. With the exhibition he gives Aurelius of his magic art (461 ff.), we may, for example, compare that of Merlin to Vivian (Ninian) in the forest of Briosque.<sup>1</sup> At Merlin's bidding, a beautiful castle appears before them, filled with knights now carolling and dancing with their ladies hand in hand, now jousting with one another on a lovely green. At the mage's command, they all disappear as mysteriously as they come. It was, indeed, no unusual thing for a magician in a Celtic story to reveal to others splendid scenes where everything was superlative in excellence ("the gretteste that ever were seyn with yē," 464), "Marvellous sights" of hunters and jousters in their revel by a fair river or on a pleasant plain, knights and ladies in merry dance, or at the festive board, where "hem lakked no vitaille that mighte hem plese" (458). The Celtic fancy delighted in such visions of an otherworld of perpetual joy. Castles which appear in all their mysterious glory at the will of a fairy or magician, and vanish again in the twinkling of an eye, are a commonplace of Breton romance. Apart, then, from its value in helping us to establish Chaucer's statement that his tale was originally told by the Bretons, the evident

<sup>1</sup> *Roman de Merlin*, ed. Sommer, pp. 222 ff.; English Prose *Merlin*, ed. Wheatley (E. E. T. S.), I, 361 ff. (cf. Mead's Introduction, pp. ccxxvi f.); *Merlin*, Paris, 1528, I, folio 145; P. Paris, *Romans de la Table Ronde*, II, 174-180.—With Merlin's exhibition of magic, compare that by Guynebans. See *Merlin*, ed. Sommer, pp. 261 ff.; English *Merlin* (E. E. T. S.), I, 361 ff.; *Merlin*, Paris, 1528, I, folio 168; P. Paris, *R. T. R.*, II, 196; *Livre d'Artus*, P (*Zt. f. franz. Sp. u. Lit.*, XVII, § 24). Also the illusions produced by Auberon before Huon, viz. a river created by enchantment (*Huon de Bordeaux*, ed. Guessard, Paris, 1860, vv. 3275-3284), a tower with battlements (*id.*, vv. 3295-3299), a palace with viands prepared therein (*id.*, vv. 3525-3529; 3592-3605). Cf. further the magic house built by Merlin (*Huth Merlin*, I, 149).—See also *Tristan*, ed. Michel, I, 222; II, 102. I am indebted to Miss Lucy A. Paton for these references.



likeness between Merlin and his fellow magician may perhaps be thought to throw additional light on Geoffrey's methods. It suggests that the Merlin legend is a composite picture, and that to Merlin have been simply transferred feats previously performed by other magicians less known to fame. If this be true, we have an obvious explanation of the fact that genuine early Welsh tradition nowhere connects with the historical bard Myrddhin any such performances as those ascribed to the romantic enchanter Merlin by that arch-combiner Geoffrey of Monmouth.

It is, of course, well known that Eastern magicians are famous for similar achievements. No one would argue that stories of illusion are confined to any one country. It is important to recognize, however, that they were popularly current among the Celts, and that there is therefore no need of seeking their immediate source in foreign lands.

In a consideration of the immediate provenience of any tale the proper names are matters of great importance; for they very frequently indicate the district in which the material, whatever its ultimate origin may be, took the shape it assumed in the particular version under discussion. Fortunately, the names in the *Franklin's Tale* corroborate entirely the conclusions we have already reached with regard to the Celtic foundation of the story it embodies. Arviragus is known nowhere outside of the Tale except as an ancient British chieftain.<sup>1</sup> The name Aurelius was borne by at

<sup>1</sup>In the ballad of *William the Conqueror*, "written by Deloney, the ballading silk-weaver," who died in or before 1600 (*Percy Folio MS.*, ed. Hales and Furnivall, I, 151 ff.), we read:

To Dover then he tooke the way,  
the castle downe for to flinge  
which Aueragus had builded there,  
the noble Brittainne kinge. (ll. 17 ff.)

The building of Dover was usually attributed to Julius Caesar (cf. Shakspeare, *Richard II*, v, 1, 2); but Camden speaks of a chart formerly hung up there which stated that Arviragus afterwards fortified it and shut up the harbor. Arviragus plays a part in *Cymbeline*.

least two British kings. And Dorigen is plainly Celtic. The localization is without exception in Great Britain or Armorica. We read that "nat fer fro Penmark" was the dwelling of him "that of Kayrud was cleped Arveragus" (73, 80), and these places are said to have been "in Armorik, that called is Britayne" (1). Thence the hero travels to "Engelond that cleped was eek Briteyne" (82). The magician, finally, is required to remove all the rocks on the Breton coast from the Gironde to the Seine. Clearly the scene of the tale is laid in Brittany, where the name Penmarch is well known as that of a headland near Quimper in the Department of Finisterre, a little to the south of Brest. There can then be no doubt that the Breton lay which Chaucer says he utilized—and it would require a great deal of negative proof to make us disbelieve his statement on this point, for he nowhere else refers a tale to such a source—took shape in Brittany, like many other poems of the same kind.

It is likely, however, that the story Geoffrey made use of (not the French lay) was current in South Wales where the historian lived. The name Arveragus<sup>1</sup> seems to be but another form of Arverus (Arverius), even as Aureliacus of Aurelius, Auriacus of Aurius, Aquiniacus of Aquinius, etc. Now, this name Arverus (Arverius)<sup>2</sup> is fortunately preserved in a Latin inscription. It occurs only once, but then, it is important to observe, in the ruins of a building in Gloucester-

<sup>1</sup>*Arviragus* seems to be composed of a prefix *Ar-*, a root *-vir-*, and a suffix *-agus*. The suffix appears also as *-agos*, *-acus*, *-akos*. Holder identifies the name (*Altceltischer Sprachschatz*, Leipzig, 1891, p. 243; cf. pp. 59, 423, 1007) with *Biracos*, *Biragos*, *Pirakos*. According to D'Arbois de Jubainville, the form *Biracos* is a derivative of *Birus*, *Birrus* (see *Revue de la numismatique française*, 1860, p. 173, pl. 8, 11; 1861, p. 62; 1868, p. 414; cf. *Revue Celtique*, xi, 156 ff.). Likewise, *Arviragus* is a derivative of *Arvurus* (*Arvirius*).

<sup>2</sup>In the genitive, *Arveri*; see Hübner, *Inscriptiones Britanniae Latinae*, 1873, nos. 1236, 1237 (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vii) = *Ephemeris epigraphica*, 7, p. 343, n. 1130 (cited Holder, p. 231).

shire (Lestercome Bottom, near Chedworth). It is therefore likely that tradition connected an Arverus (Arverius) for some reason with that locality. There existed in earliest times, as now, in South Wales (Glamorgan), near the mouth of the Severn, a town Penmarch; and we have also indications of a place "not far from Penmark" with which Kayrud may be identified. I refer to the mythical place Kaeroedd (Caeroeth) in which various people, including Gweir, son of Gweiroedd, were imprisoned, and which was located at Gloucester.<sup>1</sup> The localization in Brittany may not, then, have been original. Traditions of "Arveragus of Kayrud" apparently lingered about Gloucester. There was the place from which came the name of his dwelling (a name that is not to be found in Armorica). Near by has been discovered the Latin inscription bearing his name. It was Geoffrey from the neighboring town of Monmouth who is the first witness to the tradition, and he makes the heroine receive her name from that of the ancient kingdom of Gwent in which that place was. It is hard therefore to resist the natural conclusion that some story of the romantic Arveragus (Arverius) was current in Geoffrey's time in South Wales, and that it was the traditional association of the hero with the region of Gloucester that made Geoffrey bring the King Arviragus of Juvenal into special connection with that city. The love-story of Arveragus (Arverius) had evidently been carried over sometime earlier to Armorica, where it was again localized, the existence of Penmarch, the headland in Brittany, serving particularly well to establish it in its new abode.

The form of the story in Brittany was doubtless considerably different from that in South Wales. It was combined with foreign elements and permeated with a new chivalrous spirit. It was lengthened and elaborated. But nevertheless it remained at bottom a tale of the happy marriage of

<sup>1</sup> See Rhys, *Arthurian Legend*, Oxford, 1891, p. 365, note 1; cf. Loth, *Les Mabinogion*, I, 197, note; II, 293, 294, note 1.

Arveragus and his devoted wife, in which was exalted the principle of inviolable truth.

It may not be out of place here to call attention to the fact that we have other instances of the double development of one and the same story. The Breton lay of *Lanval* is localized at Kardoil (Carlisle), while its pendant *Graelent* is localized in Brittany. *Graelent* contains new incidents and discussions of courtly sentiment not in *Lanval*, which is on the whole the more primitive form of the story. Moreover, *Graelent* also presents the significant situation of a romantic love-story attached to an ancient king. Gradlon Mor (Graelen-Mor) appears to have usurped the place of Lanval because he was traditionally famous in the land where the story circulated. Even so Arviragus may have had attracted to himself the only extant story about him, simply because of his traditional renown.<sup>1</sup> So far, then, my chief object has

<sup>1</sup> Who was the original hero of the story, we cannot say. The Welsh *Bruts*, when translating Geoffrey, substitute for *Arviragus* the name *Gweirydd*. This is clearly not a phonetic equivalent of the name it supplanted; but it may well be the late Welsh form of an earlier *Gwerid* (*th*), which would correspond to all but the prefix of *Arverius*. There may then have been a person of this or similar name of whom the story was originally told, and it was Geoffrey who perhaps first identified him (Arverius, Gweirydd) with the chieftain whom Juvenal mentions as *Arviragus*. On Geoffrey's authority this became the established form of the chieftain's name, and it was used afterwards whenever stories were told of that prince.

Prof. Rhys, as the result of an ingenious series of conjectures (*Arthurian Legend*, pp. 365 ff.), suggested that Geoffrey's story of the marriage of Arviragus with Genuissa is "only another version of the story of Pryderi marrying a grand-daughter of Gloyw Wallt-lydan," as told in the mabinogi of Pwyll. *Gloyw* is evidently what suggested the combination to Prof. Rhys. But he is wrong in asserting that "Geoffrey of Monmouth has identified a Gloyw with Claudius Caesar." Geoffrey knew from Nennius (see above, p. 415, n.) that the foundation of Gloucester was attributed to a *Gloui* (*Gloyw*), but he discarded the notion, and identified this traditional founder of the place not with Claudius, but with a son of that emperor, a personage of the historian's own creation, whom he represents as born there—and all this obviously, not because he had any story of Gloyw in mind, but merely to avert criticism by providing for the conflicting hypo-

been to show that the *Franklin's Tale* is not only told of Celtic people, and localized in Celtic lands, but also closely connected with Celtic tradition. I have suggested also that it was first current in South Wales, where Geoffrey of Monmouth became familiar with it, that thence it was carried to Armorica, and that on the continent it got into the hands of a French poet who fashioned it in rhyme after the style of the extant Breton lays. Because in this elaborate form it contains elements that are not Celtic, does not, as we shall see, invalidate my contention with regard to its British origin.

thesis. Thus, even if we accept as sure Prof. Rhys's observations that Arviragus is correctly rendered in Welsh by Gweirydd, and that Gweirydd is "probably" another form of Gwri, and that Gwri is an occasional name of Pryderi, it is nevertheless unnecessary to combine this Pryderi with Arviragus simply because the former married a granddaughter of a certain Gloyw, while the latter married a sister (fictitious moreover) of another person of the same name, unless some similarity between the marriage of Arviragus and Genuissa on the one hand, and Pryderi and Kigva on the other can be shown to exist.

We should observe in this connection that nearly all of what is peculiar to Geoffrey in his account of the marriage of Arviragus, the emphasis he lays on its unusual felicity, the statement that Gloucester was founded as a monument of it, the explanation that the Gloui after whom Geoffrey admits it may have been called was a son of Claudius born there, the remark that Arviragus was feared by the Romans more than any king of the time, the quotation from Juvenal in support of all this, etc., is not only not in the most remote manner suggested by the tale of Pryderi, but is even not to be found in the Welsh *Brut* attributed to Tysilio (translated San Marte, in his edition of Geoffrey, 1854, p. 517 f.).

Prof. Rhys's remark, moreover,—“The mythic element still further betrays itself in his narrative, when it describes Gweirydd helping to bring Orkney and the other islands into subjection to Gloyw (Claudius)” —is of little consequence when we remember that Nennius, from whom Geoffrey borrowed, although he never mentions Arviragus, says of Claudius (§ 21): “He next sailed to the Orkneys, which he likewise conquered, and afterwards rendered tributary.”

The following triad (translated by Loth, *Les Mabinogion*, II, 283) evidently does not antedate Geoffrey: “122 (Myv. 403. 24). Trois principaux rois de combat de l'île de Prydein: Caswallawn, fils de Beli; *Gweirydd*, fils de *Cynmelyn Wledig*; Caradawc, fils de Bran ab Llyr Llediaith.”

Prof. Skeat is surely not justified in making<sup>1</sup> the unqualified assertion that "The ultimate source of the [*Franklin's*] *Tale* is certainly Eastern."

### III.

We must now pass from this study of what seem to be the foundations of the *Franklin's Tale* in early Celtic tradition to a more minute examination of its phraseology, incidents and expressions of sentiment, in order, if possible, to discover what features in the English poem are likely to have belonged to the Breton lay of Arviragus, Aurelius, and Dorigen, which, according to Chaucer's explicit statement and inherent probability, formerly existed.

I have already spoken of the lay of the *Two Lovers* as presenting a situation very similar to that in our tale—the secret love of a knight for a beautiful lady, her willingness to marry him if one necessary condition be fulfilled, its impossibility recognized unless magic aid can be secured, the journey to a wise friend in a southern city, from whom the necessary assistance is readily obtained—all of which justifies us in asserting that the two lays embody themes of the same general class. Let me now bring into comparison the passage in each case in which the young knight is first introduced to us.

El país ot un damisel,  
fiz a un conte, gent e bel.  
De bien faire pur avoir pris

In Armorik, that called is Britayne,<sup>2</sup>  
Ther was a knight that loved and dide  
his payne

<sup>1</sup> *Works of Chaucer*, III, 481.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the French lay begins in like manner:

Veritez est qu'en Neüstrie,  
Que nus apelum Normendie (7-8.)

It was the regular way to begin a Breton lay, after the conventional short prologue, which is also in Chaucer; cf. "En Bretaigne jadis maneit" (*Le Fraigne*, 3; *Yonec*, 11); "En Bretaigne maneit uns ber" (*Bisclavret*, 15); "En Seint Mallo en la cuntree" (*Laustic*, 7); "En Bretaigne a Nantes maneit (*Chaitivel*, 9); "En Bretaigne ot un chevalier" (*Elidus*, 5).

sur tuz altres s'est entremis.  
 En la curt le rei conversot,  
 assez sovent i surjurnot;  
 e la fille le rei ama,  
 e meintes feiz l'araisuna  
 qu'ele s'amur li otriast  
 e par druerie l'amast.  
 Pur ceo que pruz fu e curteis  
 e que mult li preisoit li reis,  
 li otria sa druërie,  
 e cil humblement l'en mercie.  
 (57 ff.)

To serve a lady in his beste wyse;  
 And many a labour, many a greet emprise  
 He for his lady wroghte, er she were wonne.  
 For she was oon, the faireste under sonne.  
 And eek therto come of so heigh kinrede,  
 That wel unnethes dorste this knight, for  
 drede,  
 Telle her his wo, his peyne, and his dis-  
 tresse.  
 But atte laste, she, for his worthinesse,  
 . . . . prively . . . fil of his accord  
 To take him for hir housbonde and her  
 lord. (1-14)  
 She thanked him and with ful greet  
 humblesse. (25.)

The general likeness between these passages surely indicates that Chaucer had a definite Breton lay before him and not simply a floating story, or a sophisticated tale like Boccaccio's on the same subject—and that it was furthermore very similar in style to the lays of Marie. This is, however, but one of many parallel passages which go to demonstrate this fact.

In the *Franklin's Tale* are two lovers, Arviragus and Aurelius. It is the innocent love of the former which we have found paralleled in the lay just mentioned. In the lay of *Equitan*, on the other hand, we have an instance of the love of a Breton lord for a married woman, who had long known him as a friend of the household and little suspected his passion. Like Aurelius, Equitan, who also dwelt in Brittany, suffered for a long period because of his love-longing, before he finally revealed his affection to his friend's wife.

This lay shows interesting parallels to our tale, not only in situations, but also in sentiment and general phraseology. As an instance of the last, I would cite first the opening lines of this lay to show that Chaucer's words in the prologue to his tale are simply imitated, if not translated, from the French, every lay having a prologue of this kind.

Mult unt esté noble barun  
 cil de Bretagne, li Bretun.  
 Jadis suleient par pruëse  
 par curteisie e par noblesce  
 des aventures que oient,  
 ki a plusurs genz aveneient,  
 faire les lais pur remembrance,  
 qu'um nes meist en ubliance.  
 Un en firent q'oï cunter,  
 ki ne fet mie a ubliër.

Thise olde gentil Britons in hir dayes  
 Of diverse adventures maden layes,  
 Rymeyd in hir firste Briton tonge;  
 Which layes with hir instruments they  
 songe,  
 Or elles reddden him for hir plesaunce;  
 And oon of hem have I in remembrance  
 Which I shal seyn with good wil as I can.

But what is chiefly interesting to us now in the lay of *Equitan*, is the remarkable similarity it shows to the well-known discussion of love and the condition of its happy continuance, at the opening of Chaucer's poem. Observe, for example, the likeness between the following passages. In the French, the king is pleading for the love of his seneschal's wife; in the English, Arveragus for Dorigen's.

'Ma chiere dame, a vus m'otrei!  
 Ne me tenez mie pur rei,  
 mes pur vostre hume e vostre ami!  
 Seïrement vus jur e di  
 que ieo ferai vostre plaisir.  
 Ne me laissez pur vus murir!  
 Vus seiez dame e ieo servanz,  
 vus orguilluse e ieo preianz.'

(Eq., 173 ff.)

And for to lede more in blisse hir  
 lyves,  
 Of his free wil he swoor hir as a  
 knight,  
 That never in al his lyf, he, day ne  
 night,  
 Ne sholde upon him take no maistrye  
 Agayn hir wil, ne kythe hir Ialousye,  
 But hir obeye, and folwe hir in al  
 As any love to his lady shal.

(F. T., 17 ff.)

If now we examine the French passage carefully and consider that if such sentiments are expressed in the lay of *Equitan* by Marie de France, they might very well have been in the lay of *Arviragus*, whether written by her or by another poet in the same style, we see at once that there is no necessity of going, as scholars now do,<sup>1</sup> to the *Roman de la*

<sup>1</sup> See Skeat, *Works of Chaucer*, v, 388; cf. Koepfel, "Chauceriana," *Anglia*, xiv, 258.



*Rose* for the foundation of the sentiment that Chaucer expresses in the following lines:

Heer may men seen an humble wys accord.  
 Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord,  
 Servant in love, and lord in mariage;  
 Than was he bothe in lordshipe and servage;  
 Servage? nay, but in lordshipe above,  
 Sith he hath bothe his lady and his love;  
 His lady, certes, and his wyf also,  
 The which that lawe of love acordeth to. (63 ff.)

Chaucer doubtless had the discussions of the *Roman de la Rose* in mind when he was telling his tale; but it is not necessary to believe that his discussions of love and mastery<sup>1</sup> were foisted in by him without any hint in his original. Surely, if any Breton lay should have arguments of this nature it was one that was specially intended to exalt a marriage where husband and wife dwelt together in perfect sympathy and love.

Aurelius and Equitan resemble each other and act similarly under like conditions. Of the former, we read that he was "wel biloved, and holden in gret prys (206);" of the latter, that he was "mult de grant pris e mult amez (13-14)." Each falls deeply in love with the wife of another, and suffers agonies before he dares reveal his passion. The wife is completely unconscious of the love she has awakened, and her husband unsuspecting of his friend's attachment to her. The lover pleads with the beautiful wife to grant him her love, else he shall surely die.

Further, in the lay of *Lanval*, we find an excellent parallel to the scene in the garden, where the avowal of love takes place—with the difference, however, that the rôles are reversed: it is the lady who seeks the love of the knight. In

<sup>1</sup> In *Eq.*, 141 ff., is an interesting passage beginning "*Amuriz n'est pruz, se n'est egals*," in which is shown the unwisdom of him who "*Vuelt amer par seignurie*,"—with which should be compared the passage in Chaucer beginning "Love wol nat be constreyned by maistrye" (86 ff.).

one case, Dorigen is in sorrow because of the absence of her lord; in the other, Lanval because he is not with his *amie*. In both cases, they are the object of the solicitude of their friends, who are eager to bring back to them their previous good cheer. Dorigen is induced to join a large gathering of merry-makers in a garden beside "hir castel faste by the sea" (119); but she holds aloof from the rest.

At-after diner gonne they to daunce,  
And singe also, save Dorigen allone,  
Which made alwey hir compleint and hir mone;  
For she ne saugh him on the daunce go,  
That was hir housbonde and hir love also. (191 ff.)

Aurelius seizes this opportunity to make a confession of his love; but Dorigen refuses to accept it, declaring earnestly:

Ne shal I never been untrewed wyf  
in word ne werk, as far as I have wyt;  
I wol ben his to whom that I am knit. (256 ff.)

Likewise in *Lanval*, we read that on a certain day a large gathering of knights

s'erent alé esbaneier  
en un vergier desuz la tur  
u la reine ert a surjur. (224-6.)

They urge Lanval specially to join them ("Lanval ameinent par preiere," 238). When, however, the dance begins:

Lanval s'en vait de l'autre part  
luin des altres. Mult li est tart  
que s'amie puisse tenir,  
baisier, acoler e sentir;  
l'altrui joie prise petit,  
si il nen a le sien delit. (255 ff.)

While the revelry is going on, the queen confesses her love to him; but he too refuses to accept it, because, he declares, she has already a husband to whom she should be faithful.

Ja pur vus ne pur vostre amur  
ne mesferai a mun seignur! (275-6.)

When Lanval, after this interview, realizes that he has lost his *amie*, he bitterly laments his fate. ("A sun ostel fu revenuz," 335.)

En une chambre fu tuz suls,  
pensis esteit e anguiusus.  
S'amie apele mult sovent  
mes ceo ne li valut niënt.  
Il se plaingneit e suspirot,  
d'ures en altres se pasmot  
c'est merveille qu'il ne s'ocit.  
Il ne set tant criër ne braire  
ne debate ne sei detraire,  
qu'ele en voille merci aveir,  
sul tant qu'il la puisse veoir.  
A las, cument se cuntendra!

(339-353.)

Aurelius, likewise, after his interview with Dorigen, realizes the hopelessness of his case. ("Aurelius ful ofte sore syketh" 278). All the company go home

in Joye and in solas,  
Save only wrecche Aurelius, allas!  
He to his hous is goon with sorweful herte.  
He seeth he may nat fro his deeth asterte.  
Him semed that he felte his herte colde;  
Up to the hevene his handes he gan holde,  
And on his knowes bare he sette him doun,  
And in his raving seyde his orisoun  
For verray wo out of his wit he brayde.  
He niste what he spak, but thus he seyde;  
With pitous herte his pleynt hath he bigonne.

And with that word in swowne he fil adoun  
And longe tyme he lay forth in a traunce. (291 ff.)

The brother of Aurelius looks after him "despeyred in this torment and this thought" (356), and cares for him while he lies in bed "in languor and in torment furious."

In like manner, when Lanval returns with sorrowful heart to his dwelling ("En sun lit malade culcha," 309), his friends care for him.

Li chevalier l'unt conveié;  
 mult l'unt blasmé e chasteié  
 qu'il ne face si grant dolur,  
 e maldiënt si fole amur.  
 Chescun jur l'aloënt veeir,  
 pur ceo qu'il voleient saveir  
 u il beüst, u il manjast;  
 mult dotouent qu'il s'afolast.

(409 ff.)

With this may also be compared the attitude of Dorigen's friends, who try to comfort her in her husband's absence.

She moorneth, waketh, wayleth, fasteth, pleyneþ;  
 Desyr of his presence hir so distreyneth,  
 That al this wyde world she sette at noght.  
 Hir frendes, whiche that knewe hir hevȝ thought,  
 Conforten hir in al that ever they may;  
 They prechen hir, they telle hir night and day,  
 That causelees she sleeth himself, alas!  
 And every confort possible in this cas  
 They doon to hir with al hir bisinesse,  
 Al for to make hir leve hir hevȝnesse.

(91 ff.)

In the lay of Arviragus and Dorigen the necessity in a happy marriage of mutual loyalty on the part of husband and wife was, it seems, especially emphasized. Strangely enough, we have in an extant Breton lay *Guildevuec and Guilliadun* (commonly called *Eliduc*) a curious counterpart to this poem—an example of the unhappiness that results when loyalty in marriage is shattered by guilty love. In this the longest and most carefully written of all Marie's lays, we have striking parallels in phraseology to parts of our tale; but I wish here only to dwell on the similarity in the general situation. In both stories a handsome and distinguished knight of Brittany is very happily married to a beautiful woman of high rank. After a while he goes to England to take service there and carry on warfare. His faithful wife in both cases

Forment demeine grant dolur  
 al departir de sun seignur  
 mes il l'aseüra de sei  
 qu'il li portera bone fei.

(81 ff.)

In one case, during their separation, the wife is tempted by a handsome knight, but is loyal to her husband—and so the two live the rest of their lives in sovereign bliss. In the other, the husband is tempted by a beautiful lady, and yields to her seductions, with the result that his wife's happiness is destroyed and she has to betake herself to an abbey and become a nun.

We surely need no more evidence from the poems of Marie de France, which have already served our purpose sufficiently well. It must now be clear that the *Franklin's Tale*, not only in fundamental theme, but also in the accretions of sentiment, not only in general features, but also in minute detail, shows so great similarity to the extant Breton lays that there can be no doubt that Chaucer's assertion regarding the source of his narrative is to be unhesitatingly accepted.<sup>1</sup> Even as Marie says of the three characters of the last lay I have mentioned, Eliduc, Guildeluec, and Guiliadun, so we may safely say of the three characters of the *Franklin's Tale*, Arveragus, Aurelius, and Dorigen:

De l'aventure de cez treis  
li anciën Bretun curteis  
frent le lai pur remembrer  
qu'um nel dëust pas obliër.

<sup>1</sup> Some one, indeed, after observing its great similarity in particular passages to parts of several of Marie's lays, might possibly suggest that this only evinced Chaucer's familiarity with Marie, and that he deliberately put together a new story of which the various parts are simple echoes of her poems, and for this reason termed a "Breton lay" what was really his own invention. But such an hypothesis is manifestly untenable. It not only runs counter to all that we know of Chaucer's methods, but violates every probability based on other studies in literary history. Inasmuch, however, as the Breton lay of Arveragus and Dorigen does show such striking likeness to Marie's lays, it is not impossible that she was the author of the poem Chaucer had before him; but on this point we have no evidence, and such purely conjectural matters are perhaps hardly worth consideration.

## IV.

A serious problem of another kind now demands consideration—a problem of interest and importance because it concerns the vexed question of the composition of popular tales in general, and of the lays and “matter of Britain” in particular. If it is true, one naturally inquires, that Chaucer actually followed a Breton lay in all the essentials of his narrative, a Breton lay, moreover, which in large part was closely connected with Celtic tradition, how does it happen that there are so many Oriental parallels to part of the story?

Clouston<sup>1</sup> has shown that a tale of the same general nature as Chaucer's is found in numerous Eastern versions, the oldest in Sanskrit, but others in Burmese, Persian, Indo-Persian, Hebrew, Germano-Jewish, Siberian, and Turkish—as well as in two Italian versions by the great writers Boccaccio and Bojardo, and one in modern Gaelic, in a form which shows close kinship with these above mentioned, but not with that in English. The existence of so many versions of the same story may seem to argue against my contention that Chaucer followed a particular Breton lay, which was very similar to the Breton lays now extant. But in reality it is not so. The *Franklin's Tale* stands in a group alone, quite apart from all the other stories given by Clouston by reason particularly of the Celtic elements that I have pointed out, which are found in it and in no other version. And the existence in combination with them of features which can lay no claim to such origin need not disturb us; for Breton lays were, as scholars are now beginning to recognize, a very mixed product. There is, indeed, a good deal of misconception with regard to this so-called “matter of Britain.” Students unaware of the universality of popular tales and beliefs, unacquainted with the fact that the majority of popular themes have been shown to be world wide in their

<sup>1</sup> *Originals and Analogues of some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, No. 16, pp. 289 ff.

distribution, unfamiliar, in a word, with the results of the modern comparative study of folklore, are apt to make the mistake of demanding of any tale that is claimed as Breton its exclusive production among the Celts. This is, however, quite unreasonable. A lay is a Breton lay if it embodies a tale told in the Breton language in the form such tales usually had before they were turned into the particular sort of French poem we know by that name. All our so-called Breton lays, as is well known, are preserved to us in French, and have undergone very grave alterations in passing through the hands of people of unlike temperament, training, and tradition. There are, it should be observed, French poems (e. g. *Pyramus and Thisbe*, *Narcissus*) that have absolutely nothing Breton about them, but still were called lays and included in collections of "*Lais de Bretagne*" simply to ensure popularity at a time when the lays were in supreme vogue. There are others (e. g. *Orfeo*) based on narratives clearly taken from foreign sources, which yet appear to have been current among Celtic peoples and, having been stamped by their peculiar impress, may therefore justly, though to a limited degree, be called Breton. There are others (e. g. *Fraime*) that embody stories which are genuinely Breton, although they are used in their fundamental features in all parts of the world, for they were localized in Celtic lands, and, what is most important, were regarded by the Bretons themselves as native. And, finally, there is still another class preserving stories, like *Lanval* and *Guingamor*, which record traditions or conceptions generally acknowledged by scholars as particularly Breton, inasmuch as they are the product of conditions that appear to have existed only on Celtic soil. But, I repeat, a lay is a "Breton" lay, whether it embodies foreign or native material, so long as that material was popularly current among the Celts and not regarded by them as essentially different from their other traditions. Now, we may be confident that the Breton peasants, or warriors for that matter, did not trouble any more about the origin of the

stories that appealed to them and that they were wont to narrate than does the ordinary English speaking person to-day, albeit this is an infinitely more reflective age, about the origin of the common words which he uses to express his ideas. Any story was readily accepted if it was to the popular liking, and it thereupon became an unquestioned Breton possession. If such a story, thus adopted by them, and popularly current in their language, was put into lay form, it was justly called a "Breton lay;" and it was also entitled to that name after it was re-written in French verse.

Granted, then, that Chaucer's Tale is in part paralleled in the Orient and elsewhere, his original may still have been an Old French "lay." Are not the Old French poems *L'Oiselet*, *Aristote*, *L'Espervier*, all called "lays," though the stories they embody are of pure Oriental origin? Inasmuch as they have little or no intermixture of Celtic elements, they hardly deserve the epithet "Breton," though it has sometimes been applied to them; but there is certainly no reason for withholding it from the Lay of Arviragus, which, as I have endeavored to show, is evidently based on Celtic tradition.

The combination of Celtic and foreign material in our story may possibly have been brought about by the Bretons themselves. Yet, much more probably we may regard it as the work of the French redactor of the old Celtic story. From what source, it may now be asked, did he get the wherewithal to embellish his tale, and what was his motive in its transformation?

In order to answer these questions, however, we must first decide what relation, if any, the Breton Lay of Arviragus, Aurelius, and Dorigen bore to the parallel tale which Boccaccio has embodied in his novel of *Gilberto*, *Ansaldò*, and *Dianora*, in the *Decameron* (x, 5).<sup>1</sup> Formerly, most annotators of Chaucer asserted that this was the direct source of

<sup>1</sup> Previously told by him in his youthful work *Filocolo* (Bk. v).



the *Franklin's Tale*; but the best critics no longer hold that view.<sup>1</sup> Professor Skeat doubtless expresses the opinion of most scholars nowadays when he writes: "We may be sure that Boccaccio and Chaucer drew their versions from very similar sources, as shown by the introduction of the magician. At the same time we not only notice how Boccaccio has given Italian names to his characters, but has even altered the chief circumstance on which the story depends, by substituting a flower-garden in January for the removal of the rocks." Professor Skeat is thus clearly of opinion that Boccaccio had some version of Chaucer's original before him, which he deliberately altered in very important features, "in order," as he says, "to render the story more congruous to an Italian location and scenery."<sup>2</sup>

These remarks indicate, I believe, a mistaken idea of the relation of the Breton lay to the Italian novel. There seems to me to be no evidence that Boccaccio altered the material at his disposal in any fundamental feature. That he based his narrative on a story current in Italy is made probable by the fact that Bojardo independently records a parallel tale. Neither of them, apparently, knew even of the existence of a form of the story in which Arviragus, Aurelius, and Dorigen were the chief figures, where the events were localized in Brittany, where the removal of the rocks from the Breton coast was the condition of the lady's love, and where the tempted wife was earnestly devoted to a loving husband who tenderly reciprocated her affection. On the contrary, Boccaccio's novel must be regarded as quite independent of the Breton lay. The very obvious agreement between them is easily explained if we suppose that the French author of that lay, when he was fashioning the old Celtic story of Arviragus to accord with the taste of the time, made use of some accessible version of the Oriental tale, current in the

<sup>1</sup> Yet Landau says (*Quellen des Dekameron*, 1884, p. 94): "Chaucer hat wahrscheinlich auch Boccaccio's Novelle benutzt."

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., III, 480-81, 484.

West, on which Boccaccio based his novel. In this tale it was not the devotion to each other of a happily married pair, that was the chief theme, but rather the discussion of comparative generosity on the part of a husband who found that his wife had made a foolish promise to an ardent suitor, a lover who renounced his claim to his lady's love when it was freely accorded him, and a magician who refused all reward for his services to the lover when he saw that no advantage had accrued therefrom to his disappointed but magnanimous associate.

It is therefore in the highest degree probable that in the French lay for the first time the *débat*-motive, and all that it entails, was connected with the Arviragus story. Now for the first time, it was asked concerning Arviragus, Aurelius, and the magician: "Whiche was the moste fre, as thynketh you?" In the hands of a French courtly poet the primitive Celtic tale was thus transformed, that it might appeal more effectively to readers under the sway of chivalrous convention, fond of finespun discussions of the theory and practise of love.

It may seem idle to speculate regarding the original ending of this tale; for, of course, no positive results can be obtained. But the inquiry is nevertheless instructive, inasmuch as it seems to throw light on the chief conceptions the story embodies.

If the *Franklin's Tale* has any definite moral, it is summed up in the words of Arviragus: "Trouthe is the hyeste thing that man may kepe" (751).<sup>1</sup> Apparently, however, it was not Chaucer who introduced this idea. The virtue of keeping one's plighted troth was no doubt already emphasized in the Breton lay he had before him. It is interesting to observe that it appears prominently in another Middle English poem which also claims to be based on a lay of Britain. In *The Erl of Tolous* is portrayed a beautiful lady resembling

<sup>1</sup> See the last quotation, p. 407, above, and the second, p. 408.

Dorigen in nature and spirit. Of her husband, the Emperor of Almayn, we read :

Thys emperour had a wyfe,  
The fayrest oon, that evyr bare lyfe,  
Of hyr body sche was trew,  
As evyr was lady, that men knew. (37 ff.)

The handsome Earl of Tolouse, though the emperor's enemy, falls desperately in love with her and at last gets one of her followers to plight his troth to bring him safely to her presence. This knight, however, divulges the plan to the empress and traitorously suggests that they seize the favorable opportunity to rid themselves of a dreaded foe. But the empress is too highminded to entertain such a thought. She insists that he "fulfill his covenant" and even does what she can to make his task easy.

The lady seyde: 'So mot y goo,  
Thy soul ys lost, yf thou do so,  
*Thy trouth þou schalt fullfyll.'*

*Y red, þou hold thy trouth !*  
Certys, yf thou hym begyle,  
Thy soule ys in gret paryl,  
Syn thou hast made hym oth. (280 ff.)

Her faithfulness to her "troth" once plighted<sup>1</sup> is also shown in the fact that she does not betray two knights who in her husband's absence confess their love (having first obtained her promise not to disclose their interview) although under the greatest provocation. Fearing betrayal, they accuse her of infidelity, and connive so evilly that she is condemned to die unless some one is able successfully to champion her cause. The Earl of Tolouse, respecting her purity, comes

<sup>1</sup> "True" and "troth" echo throughout the poem. The phrase "To plight one's troth," occurs in ll. 210, 219, 276, 504, 550, 583; "troth," with another verb, in 282, 294, 635; "true" in 43, 53, 216, 226, 236, 313, 506, 568, 592, 917, 928, 935, 985, 1023, 1037, 1056.—(Ed. Lütke, Berlin, 1881).

to her rescue. His generous act dispels the Emperor's previous hostility towards him, and the two warriors become good friends. After the Emperor's death, the Earl marries the beautiful lady he has loved so truly, and rules over the land.

Fidelity to one's plighted word as an underlying motive is, indeed, very frequently met with in the early tales of the Celts. Their heroes made promises rashly and got themselves into sore trouble on this account; but they never denied their word. A knight's promise once given was regarded as sacred and must be fulfilled, even though it meant the handing over of his loving wife to another's embrace.

In the genuine old Mabinogi of Pwyll,<sup>1</sup> for example, a petitioner was rashly promised by the hero whatever boon he should ask. He thereupon asked for Pwyll's beloved, the beautiful fay Rhiannon. The petitioner turned out to be her unsuccessful suitor Gwawl, who by magic had shifted his shape and thus obtained the promise by deceit. Nevertheless, Pwyll felt himself bound by his word and yielded Rhiannon to the man she had refused for his sake. Here also, however, the affair ended happily. A respite was secured, at the end of which Gwawl was so placed that he voluntarily released Pwyll from his covenant, and the hero remained undisturbed in his love.

In the beautiful Irish story of the Wooing of Etain, at the latest from the eleventh century, we have a similar situation. The fairy King Mider, one fine summer's day, appeared at the court of Eochaid Airem, overlord of Ireland, saying he had come to play chess with him. First he let the king win in order to give him confidence. Then the two made a covenant that the victor in the next game should name his own prize. Mider won, and at once claimed the right to embrace and kiss Etain, the king's wife. The king,

husband's  
not wife's  
unsuccessfully

<sup>1</sup> Lady Guest's translation, 1849, vol. III; Loth, *Les Mabinogion*, 1889, I.

though sorely troubled, did not think of refusing. He only asked for a postponement. Mider at the time appointed carried the lady off; but later the king won her back.

We may have an echo of this story in the English lay of Orfeo,<sup>1</sup> of which a French original unquestionably existed. The harper in disguise made his way to fairyland whither his wife had been borne. There he pleased the king so much by his music that the latter bade him make any request he liked and it should be granted. When he asked for Eurydice, the king began to object, but was silenced by Orfeo's words:

"O Sir," he seyde, "gentil king,  
 ȝete were it a wele fouler þing  
 To here a lesing of þi mouþe,  
 So, Sir, as ȝe seyde nouþe,  
 What i wold aski, have y schold,  
 And nedes þou most þi word hold."  
 þe king seyde: "Seþþen it is so,  
 Take hir bi þe hond and go.  
 Of hir ichil þatow be bliþe."<sup>2</sup>

In Arthurian romance the statement that "a king must not lie" is of frequent occurrence, and is regularly used to force him to keep a promise rashly made and unexpectedly embarrassing in its fulfillment. So, for example, the young Libeaus Desconus<sup>3</sup> declares that Arthur will let him undertake the freeing of the lady of Sinadoun or else prove that he is not "trewe of word;" and Arthur must needs consent, despite the indignant protests of the messenger who will none of the lad. As Renaud de Beaujeu puts it:<sup>4</sup>

"Par le covent que tu m'en as,  
 Te quier le don que m'as promis.  
 Raison feras, ce m'est avis;

<sup>1</sup> This lay presents the classical story of Orpheus completely transformed. All the changes made are in the direction of Celtic tradition. See Kittredge, "Sir Orfeo," *Amer. Journal of Philology*, vol. VII.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Zielke, 461 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Libeaus Desconus*, ed. Kaluza, 171 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Bel Inconnu*, ed. Hippeau, 214 ff.

Rois es, si ne dois pas mentir  
 Ne covent a nului faillir."  
 Ce dit li rois: "Dont i ales,  
 Puisqu' estes si entalentes."

This idea is phrased forcibly in the late Scottish metrical romance, *Lancelot of the Laik*:<sup>1</sup>

O kingis word shuld be a kingis bonde,  
 And said It is, a kingis wurd shuld stond;  
 O kingis word, among our faderis old,  
 Al-out more precious and more sur was hold  
 Than was the oth or seel of any wight;  
 O king of trouth suld be the werray lyght,  
 So treuth and Iustice to o king accordyth.

In Gottfried's *Tristan*<sup>2</sup> we have a very interesting parallel to the situation in our Tale. Gandin, a noble Irish knight, who has long loved Ysolde in Ireland, journeys to Cornwall in the hope of winning her from King Mark. He comes as a minstrel to the court, but will not play until the king promises him whatever boon he may ask. After finishing his lay, he demands the queen and will take nothing else instead. Rather than be forsworn, Mark finally abandons his wife, and Gandin leads her, weeping bitterly, to the sea-shore, where his boat lies ready to conduct her away. By a skilful ruse, however, Tristan manages to outwit Gandin and restores Ysolde to her lord. Gandin, sorrowful and ashamed, makes no further effort to regain her.

Gottfried's account, as is well known, is based on that of the Anglo-Norman poet Thomas, who wrote not far from the middle of the twelfth century. The episode was doubtless earlier a separate Breton lay. The story was re-told in the English *Sir Tristrem*,<sup>3</sup> also based on Thomas's work. The king let Ysolde go, rather than be called "false." There was no

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Skeat, E. E. T. S., 1865, ll. 1673 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Bechstein, 1869, vv. 13108 ff.; cf. Miss Weston's translation, II, 33 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Kölbing, 1882, ll. 1805 ff.

question of losing what he regarded as his "manhood" even to keep his wife.<sup>1</sup>

Malory preserves an echo of the same story<sup>2</sup> in which the similarity to the *Franklin's Tale* is even more striking, for now the queen makes the rash promise without Mark's knowledge. Sir Palamides meets Isoud alone in the forest making great moan because of the absence of Brangwaine who has been carried off. He promises to recover her if she will grant whatever boon he asks. He does as he agrees and later appears before the king and demands the fulfillment of the lady's promise. "Sir, said Palamides, I promised your queen Isoud to bring again dame Brangwaine that she had lost, upon this covenant, that she should grant me a boon that I would ask, and without grudging other advisement she granted me. What say ye, my lady? said the king. It is truly as he saith, said the queen, to say the sooth I promised him his asking for love and joy that I had to see her. Well madam, said the king, and if ye were hasty to grant him what boon he would ask, I will well that ye perform your promise. Then said Sir Palamides, I will that ye wit that I will have your queen to lead her and govern her where as me list." The king does not refuse and Palamides puts Ysoud on his horse behind him and rides away. Later Tristrem comes up with Palamides and recovers the queen after a hard battle, "for both they fought for love of one

<sup>1</sup> The abduction of Guinevere is but another variant of this theme. The version of the story recorded by Hartmann von Aue in his *Ywein* is the nearest like the episode in which Tristan figures. Arthur, having promised an unknown knight (Milianz, Meleagant) an indefinite boon, felt obliged to give up Guinevere when she was demanded of him. She was, however, rescued by one of the king's followers specially devoted to her, here possibly Gawain.—Other more or less divergent accounts of the adventure are given by Chrétien, Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, the author of *Die Krône*, Malory, etc.; see G. Paris, *Rom.*, xii; Wend. Foerster, *Introd. to Der Karrenritter*; Weston, *Legend of Sir Gawain*, pp. 67 ff.; *Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac*, 46 ff. Naturally, the king should never be the rescuer.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. viii, ch. 29 ff. Cf. Löseth, *Roman en Prose de Tristan*, § 43.

lady." Sir Palamides must renounce his claim to Ysoud and leave the country.

Thus it appears that the idea of faithfulness in keeping a promise, no matter what sorrow it occasions, which is fundamental in the *Franklin's Tale*, is also prominent in early Celtic stories, in Breton lays, and in romances based on the "matter of Britain."<sup>1</sup> The precise form of the story at the basis of the Lay of Arviragus, we shall probably never discover. But one thing is, as we have seen, almost certain: it had a different ending. The account of Pwyll, Gwawl and Rhiannon suggests what may possibly have been the general features of the original conclusion. Dorigen's troth once plighted, both she and her husband recognized when the condition she had established was unexpectedly fulfilled that the result was inevitable. Arviragus handed his wife over to Aurelius. But in some way a respite was secured and before it was ended the lover found himself in such a position that he voluntarily released Dorigen from her unhappy promise.

It is probable that the magician is an importation from the foreign tale. The lovers Gwawl and Gandfn relied on their own arts to win the lady of whom they were enamoured. Doubtless it was so in the beginning with Aurelius. The magician, however, was a very prominent figure in the Oriental tale, and when its ending was adopted the magician appears to have been taken along with the rest. The lover was made over in the likeness of conventional mediaeval characters of the same sort and the illusions he brought

<sup>1</sup> It is even as Sir Walter Scott long since remarked in his edition of *Sir Tristrem* (p. 322):

"Good faith was the very corner-stone of chivalry. Whenever a knight's word was pledged, it mattered not how rashly, it was to be redeemed at any price. Hence the sacred obligation of the *don octroyée*, or *boon granted* by a knight to his suppliant. Instances without number occur in romance, in which a knight, by rashly granting an indefinite boon, was obliged to do, or suffer, something extremely to his prejudice."



about were explained as the achievements of another person, a professional magician, to whom he applied for aid.

## V.

There remains but one other matter that invites discussion in the present study. How has Chaucer altered the Breton lay he had before him? This question admits of a fairly satisfactory answer. Although the poet in general seems to have followed his original closely, there are still certain parts of the *Franklin's Tale* which we can affirm with some confidence first became connected with the story in his hands.<sup>1</sup> Of these the following may be mentioned: 1, the discussion of the cause of evil in the world, *à propos* of the existence of the dangerous rocks on the Breton coast; 2, the abundant references to astrology;<sup>2</sup> 3, the "pleynt" of Aurelius to Apollo, "Lord Phebus" (303-351); and 4, Dorigen's "compleynt" to Fortune, in which she cites "examples" of ladies who slew themselves rather than be polluted—an unnecessarily long digression, of about one hundred lines (627-728) taken from the treatise of Jerome against Jovinian.

These passages, which comprise about one-fourth of the whole poem, are clearly additions made by the English author. The first is interesting to us as perhaps throwing a sidelight on the poet's personal attitude towards religion and life. As to the second, we know how fond Chaucer was of astrological lore, and are not surprised at its insertion here. Moreover, the passage beginning, "Phebus wex old and hewed lyk latoun" (517 ff.) is so good that we cannot but feel grateful for that digression at least, whatever our attitude may be towards the particulars of the magician's methods. With regard to the two "complaints," I would only say that they belong to a very distinct style of lyric love poetry

<sup>1</sup> Skeat points out also (v, 387 ff.) slight borrowings from Persius, Dionysius Cato, Ovid, Boethius, and the *Roman de la Rose*.

<sup>2</sup> 329-30, 401-406, 426-7, 517-527; 542-565.

prevalent in Chaucer's day, and that their introduction in this poem is conventional. Chaucer could hardly have helped making his lovers "complain" in this manner, unless he deliberately avoided the literary customs of his contemporaries, with which, on the contrary, he elsewhere shows much sympathy.

It was thus under the influence of contemporary French works that he makes Aurelius turn poet and unburden his distressed soul in verse.

He was dispeyred, nothing dorste he seye,  
 Save in his songes somewhat wolde he wreye  
 His wo, as in a general compleynning;  
 He seyde he lovede, and was biloved nothing.  
 Of swich matere made he many layes,  
 Songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes. (215 ff.)

Chaucer allows him "two yeer and more" for such amusement, in which he surely had a decent chance to do himself justice and analyze all his emotions. Now, if we turn to Guillaume de Machaut's *Livre du Voir-Dit*,<sup>1</sup> itself a "general compleynning," we find a person similarly occupied when in a like condition, though not for quite so long.

On li a dit and raconté  
 Qu'un yver and près d'un esté  
 Avez esté griefment malades:  
 Et que, toudis, faisiés balades,  
 Rondeaux, motés et virelais  
 Complaintes et amoureux lais. (ll. 113 ff.)

Chaucer himself, as is well known, though never, we hope, in such a pitiable plight as Aurelius, yet tried his hand at the same sort of composition:

Many an ympne for your halydayes,  
 That highten Balades, Roundels, Virelayes.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, it is perhaps possible to trace the direct influence

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Paulin Paris, Paris, 1875, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Legend of Good Women*, ll. 422-23.

of Machaut in the description of the garden, so like is it to part of the *Dit du Vergier*,<sup>1</sup> with which there can be hardly any doubt that the poet was familiar. The situation in both cases is very much the same. A lover, afflicted by the absence of his or her loved-one, enters a beautiful garden one spring morning in the hope of dismissing sorrow by watching the revelry of others—but without success; for thoughts of the loved-one prevent any real participation in the general happiness. That neither of the gardens was to blame, is evident from the following similar descriptions:

De fleurs et de feuilles si bel  
Si bel, si gent, si agréable  
Si très plaisant, si délitable  
Et plein de si très bonne odour  
Que nulz n'en auroit la savour  
Tout fust ses cuers déconfortez  
Qu'il ne fust tout réconfortez  
Et tant estoit de joie plainz

Je ne scay que ce pooit estre  
Fors que le paradis terrestre.

(p. 12.)

This garden ful of leves and of floures  
And craft of mannes hand so curiously,  
Arrayed hadde this gardin, trewely,  
That never was ther gardin of swich  
prys,  
Bot if it were the verray paradys.  
The odour of floures and the freshe  
sighte

Wolde han maad any herte for to  
lighte

That ever was born, bot if to gret  
siknesse

Or to gret sorwe held it in distresse;  
So ful it was of beautee with plesaunce.

(180 ff.)

The *Franklin's Tale* is not, it is evident, an entirely harmonious whole. When reading it, we do not really breathe the pure atmosphere of Breton romance. Sometimes we find ourselves letting our imagination wander along delightful paths of illusion; but the treat does not last long. A shrewd practical remark of Chaucer's calls us suddenly back to this world of common sense. The bubbles of conventional eloquence, which we half believed were sound, are pricked by a sly parenthesis, and we then smile at a lover's rhetoric when we were before quite disposed to let it engage us as it did a reader in mediaeval times. Courtly sentiments, it is hinted,

<sup>1</sup> G. de Machaut, *Oeuvres* [ed. Tarbé], 1849, pp. 11 ff.

struggle with bourgeois experience. Romantic lovemaking, we are disconcertingly reminded, has a practical aftermath. Illusions about one's love are apt to disappear.

Who coude telle, but he had wedded be,  
The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee  
That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf?

Alas! nobody, Chaucer implies, can tell beforehand, or without personal experience. Men have lordship over their wives *such as it is* (15). These "noble wyves" make much ado about their husbands "when hem lyketh" (90). In a word, Chaucer's advice to the married is:

Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so most I goon,  
Ye shul it lerne, wher-so ye wole or noon. (49-50.)

These sly remarks, most humorous and entertaining though they are, nevertheless are out of harmony with the spirit of a Breton lay, where much of the charm consists in the remoteness of the scene and situation. We are not accustomed, moreover, to have lay-writers become personal and laugh at their own rhetoric, as Chaucer does about the fall of night:

the brighte sonne loste his hewe;  
For thorisonte hath reft the sonne his light;  
This is as muche to seye as it was night. (288 ff.)

His humor throughout is delightful, yet would be judged sometimes out of place by the critic who simply viewed the tale as an independent artistic narrative.

But this, I would urge, no one is justified in doing. The tale before us is but part of a great whole. It is a Franklin, "Epicurus owne sone," we must remember, who is telling this Breton lay, and telling it to people very different from those for whom it was originally intended, as well as under very remarkable conditions. The Franklin is a dramatic figure whom Chaucer is eager to bring clearly before us, even if the illusion of the particular story assigned him be somewhat interfered with by the way in which he could only tell

it and be himself. And although it may justly be said that, even so, Chaucer is not entirely above reproach, for he puts too much learned disquisition into the mouth of this "burel" man, we cannot but recognize that most of the inconsistencies in his narrative are the result of his effort to make the situation dramatic and to keep the reader always conscious of the circumstances under which the story is being told.

This story, transmitted from the feudal past, the Franklin knew when he made his choice would interest the young man beside him, whom he had just been praising and whose praise he in his turn hoped to gain. In truth, one cannot fail to observe that the description of the Squire in the Prologue, "a lovyere and a lusty bachelere," is strikingly similar to that of the

lusty Squyer, servant to Venus,  
Which that ycleped was Aurelius.

Of Chaucer's Squire, we read :

Embrouded was he, as it were a mede  
Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and rede,  
Singing he was, or floytinge al the day.  
He was as fresh as is the month of May.

And of the squire who sang and danced before Dorigen :

fressher [he] was and jolyer of array  
As to my doom, than is the monthe of May.

It might be said of Aurelius as of him :

He coude songes make and wel endyte  
Juste and eek daunce, and wel portreye and write.

He too was "wonderly delivre and greet of strengthe;" and that he "loved hot," certainly Dorigen would attest. Nor was the obvious similarity between the Squire and the generous lover in our Tale, due to accident; but rather to the poet's happy design. To have the Franklin recount this Breton lay of Arviragus and Dorigen immediately after the

*So Kithley  
hous. of*

*Mod. Phil. for*

*April 1912 on*

*the Marriage of*

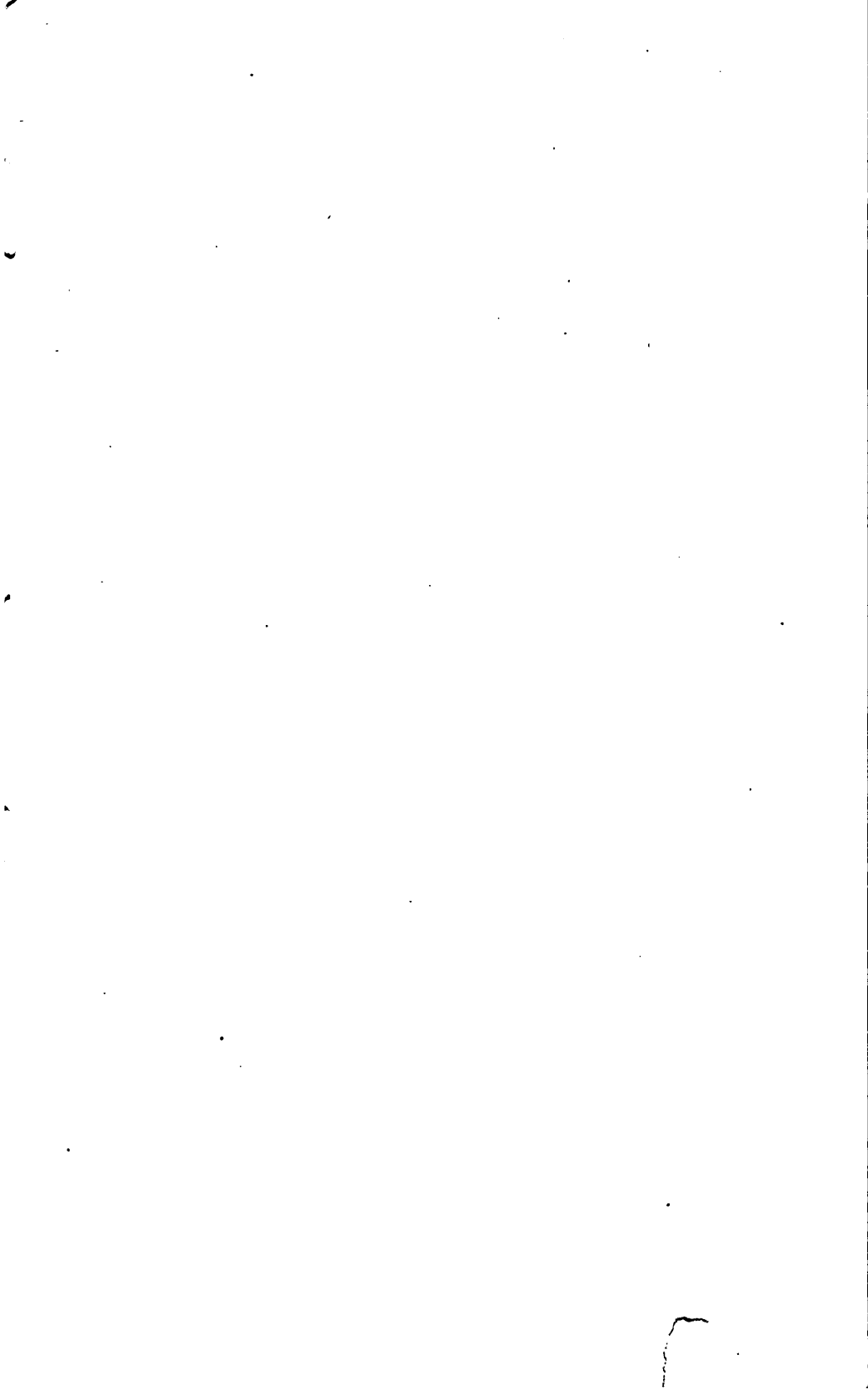
Squire had finished his romantic narrative of Canacee, was the most effective compliment that he had yet paid the noble youth he so much admired. Nowhere has Chaucer shown more skill in making a transition from one story to another, or more wisdom in choosing the teller for a tale. We can only regret that he found no occasion to record how the Squire, the worthy Knight, or some other of the Franklin's happy company, received this charming lay, which, fortunately for us, he has rescued from the greedy sea of oblivion.

WILLIAM HENRY SCHOFIELD.

*Additional note to page 443.*

Attention may be called to the fact that in the legend of Mongan, the Irish hero and enchanter, there is a close parallel to the story of Pwyll. Mongan has rashly made an indefinite promise to the king of Leinster in order to obtain some splendid kine. He and his wife Dubh-Lacha of the White Hand are one day together when the king and his hosts approach. "What hast thou come to seek?" said Mongan. "For, by my word, if what thou seekest be in the province of Ulster, thou shalt have it." "It is, then," said the king of Leinster. "To seek Dubh-Lacha have I come." Silence fell upon Mongan. And he said: "I have never heard of anyone giving away his wife." "Though thou hast not heard of it," said Dubh-Lacha, "give her, for honour is more lasting than life." Anger seized Mongan, and he allowed the king of Leinster to take her with him." Here also the captor is a suitor of the lady, and she pretends to reciprocate his affection. By establishing a condition to her love, she secures a year's respite before she shall grant it. In the meantime, she is won back from the king's power by craft. See Meyer-Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, I, 77 ff.; also I, 49-52. See, further, Nutt's discussion of the age of the material (I, 136 ff.), and of the relation of the Mongan to the Arthur legend (II, ch. xiii). I am indebted to Miss Lucy A. Paton for reminding me of this important parallel.

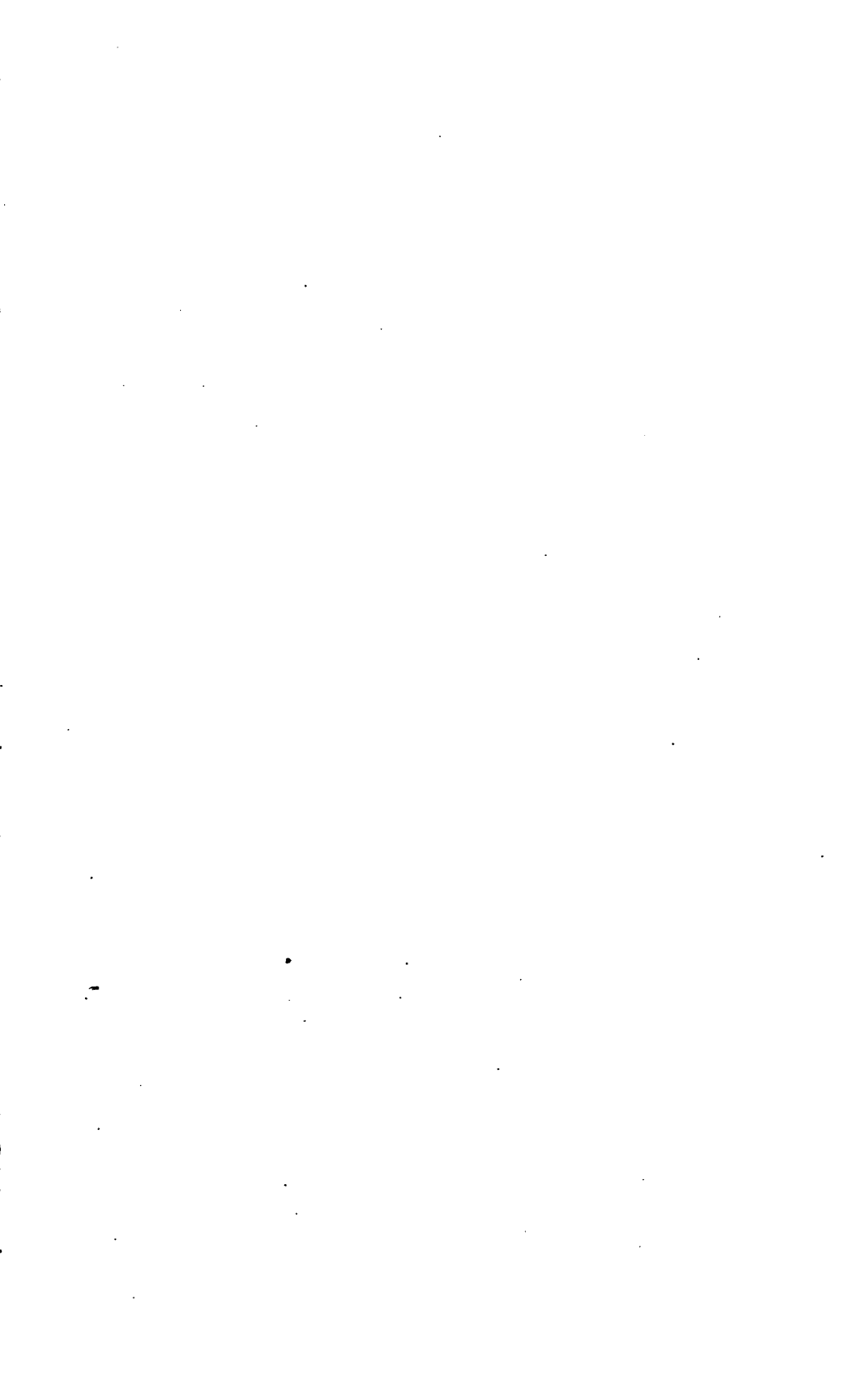
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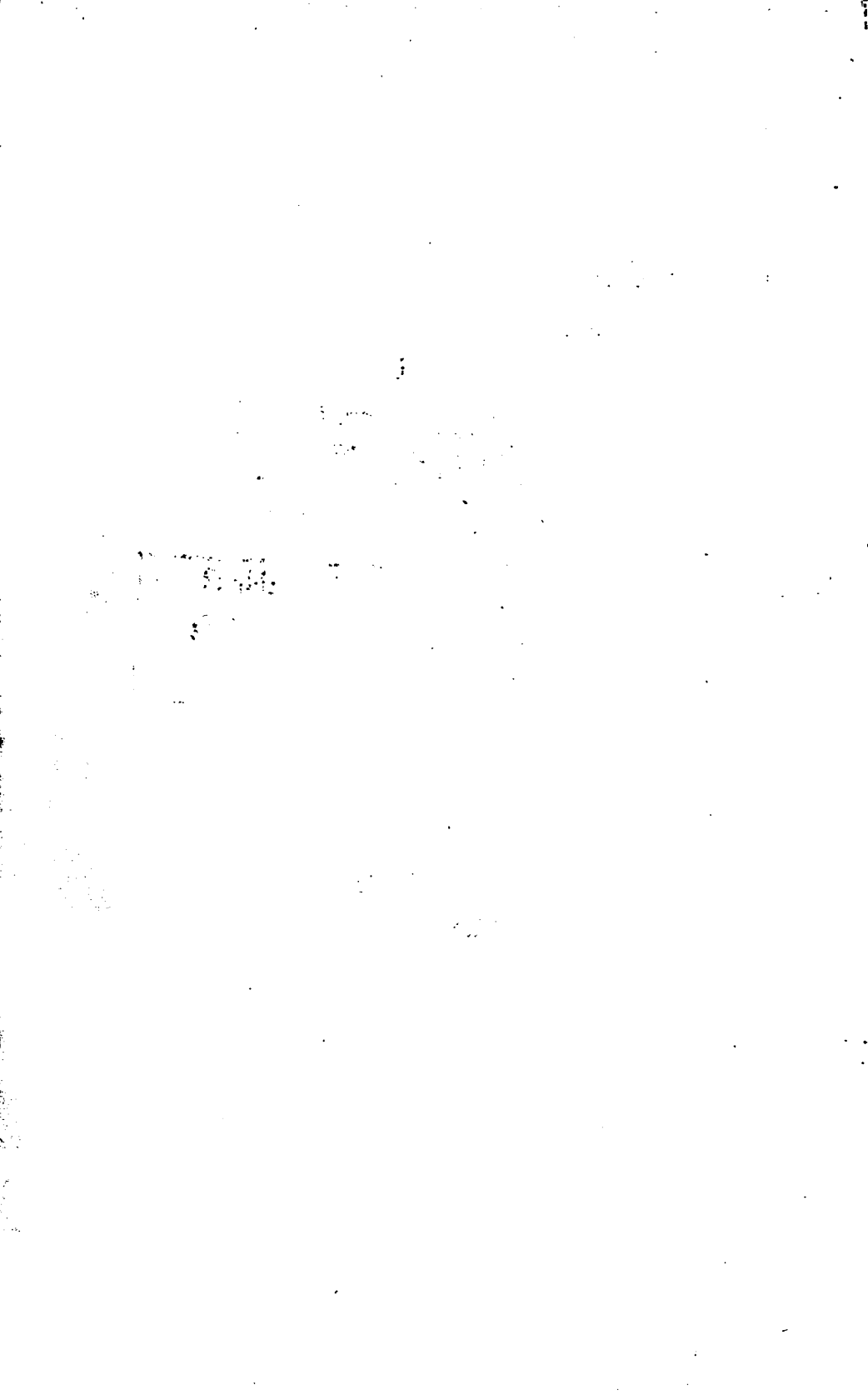












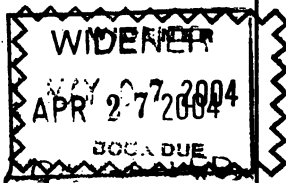


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